

PETITION

OF

JAMES F. HALIDAY AND OTHERS,

PRAYING

The establishment of a national printing office at the seat of government.

MARCH 6, 1848.

Referred to the Committee on Printing, and ordered to be printed.

The memorial of the undersigned, book-printers,
RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS :

That at a time when patriotic legislators are desirous of consulting economy in public expenditures, while the contract system, so far as Congress is concerned in the matter of public printing, appears to have little favor, it would seem advisable to annul the present law pertaining to printing and book binding, and that provision be made for the establishment of a national printing office.

That if Congress shall be of opinion that reservation south of No. 12, near and west of the Capitol, having the convenience of a running stream of water, can be constitutionally taken for other purposes than for public walks, shrubs, and trees, the same would be a good location for the office; or, if it were more desirable at present, the brick building east, called the "new capitol," could be leased for a term of years, with the right of purchase for a given sum.

That the undersigned are well aware that many excellent compositors are adverse to the establishment of a national office, while they strenuously oppose the *contract system* as one that is not calculated to improve the quality of printing, while sooner or later it will lead to the invasion of their "*reserved rights*," as artisans, in the diminution of wages. As "the field of letters" is one not calculated for party strife, and printers would serve their common country faithfully in all the mutations of party, it is natural for the "sons of the press" to apprehend the influence of favoritism, upon party grounds. But the memorialists respectfully represent, that Congress could assign some literary and scientific man to take charge of the establishment, who need not be a practical printer, but who, being responsible for the character of the work done, would see to the employment of the most efficient hands.

That as a number of workmen will necessarily be employed, who can thus be taken off work not so urgently desired by either House, and placed on documents wanted at short notice; in like manner, when the public work would suffer no detriment, circulars or pamphlet speeches
Tippin & Streeper, printers.

could be printed at the actual expense incurred, and be charged to the members ordering the same. In like manner, extra impressions from lithographic plates could be taken for transmission to congressional districts, for no other than the actual expense.

That the Nautical Almanac and astronomical ephemeris could be printed at the national office, and thus the national flag of our ships be directed by observations taken at the capital of this nation, and dependence upon scientific labors at Greenwich obviated, while the consequent taunt of our deficiencies in science would be avoided for the future.

The memorialists respectfully represent, that steam-presses and other suitable materials in the large printing offices could be purchased at a fair valuation, and thus considerable saving of expense in the outset be made to the public, while common friends to the profession would not suffer either in pocket or in feeling by the change proposed.

That to those who, while they acknowledge the feasibility of the plan, doubt the constitutional power of Congress in the premises, the memorialists respectfully suggest that the power to employ clerks in the Capitol presupposes the power to employ printers, for printing is an expeditious method of multiplying copies.

And, as in duty bound, your memorialists will ever pray.

JAMES F. HALIDAY.

WM. GREER & CO.

DANIEL TUTTLE.

C. ALEXANDER.

PATRICK H. BROOKS.